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Suicides in the Nattika firka, Malabar.

* 1424 *Q*.—P. K. GOPALAKRISHNAN : Will the Hon. the Minister for Finance be pleased to state the number of persons who are reported to have committed suicide in the year 1954 in Nattika firka, Ponnani taluk, Malabar?

THE HON. SRI C. SUBRAMANIAM :—" 24, Sir."

SRI P. K. GOPALAKRISHNAN :—" May I know whether the Government have ascertained the reasons for such a large number of cases of suicide in one firka, i.e., in the Nattika firka, Malabar? One of these cases relates to committing suicide by a High School student because he could not pay his school fees. In another case, a person committed suicide in front of the Police station itself because he had been starving for a number of days and could not bear starvation any further. This is a very important matter and may I know whether the Government have ascertained the reasons? "

THE HON. SRI C. SUBRAMANIAM :—" I do agree that there are a large number of cases of suicide in Malabar as such. I do not know whether it is due to the prevalence of certain ideology in that district. But still, we are trying to find out the causes."

DR. K. B. MENON :—" Are the Government aware that some of the alleged suicides are due to foul play? Recently there was a case of suicide in the adjoining firka. The Police have not so far conducted proper enquiries? "

THE HON. SRI C. SUBRAMANIAM :—" The question of ' proper enquiry ' is a matter of opinion. The Police try their best to detect crimes. But if they are unable to get any reliable evidence, they cannot go on charge-sheeting all sorts of persons, on suspicion."

SRI K. P. GOPALAN :—" May I know whether the Government are aware that some of these suicides are due to starvation and whether the Government will take steps to provide some means of livelihood to the people? "

THE HON. SRI C. SUBRAMANIAM :—" I have not heard any case of starvation deaths or suicides due to starvation. Many cases are due to frustration."

SRI T. C. NARAYANAN NAMBIAR :—" May I know whether the Government are aware that in this particular firka, namely, the Nattika firka, there were as many as 24 cases of suicides. According to the Hon. the Minister for Finance, these deaths are due to some particular ideology prevalent in that place. May I know whether the Government are aware that even they had to declare that firka —Nattika firka—as ' famine-stricken area ' and had to open gruel centres for giving relief to the people in that firka? "

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THE HON. SRI C. SUBRAMANIAM :—" Mere declaration of that area as ' famine-stricken ' or ' communist-stricken ' will not help the problem. It is a question of economic development of the area and we are trying our best to do that."

SRI S. DAIVASIGAMONEY :—" A person commits suicide when he is suffering either from extreme want or from megalomania. In this particular case, a large number of persons have committed suicide. May I know whether this is due to the fact that all those persons who committed suicide were suffering from some kind of peculiar disease or were suffering from extreme want? "

THE HON. SRI C. SUBRAMANIAM :—" I have already stated that we have not received any reports of deaths due to starvation. Therefore, these deaths should be due to some other cause. I am sorry I do not have sufficient data in my hand to say specifically the cause of these deaths. I can only speculate."

SRI S. SWAYAMPRAKASAM :—" It has been admitted that a number of cases of death by suicide have taken place, and from the point of view of the Government they may be due to a peculiar ideology prevalent in Malabar. Dr. K. B. Menon pointed out that there was foul play and that the Police were unable to investigate properly in the matter. When a number of deaths take place all on a sudden, we must take into consideration the peculiar circumstances of the case. May I know whether the Government will institute an enquiry into the matter or appoint a Special Officer to make confidential enquiries into this question and report to the Government? "

THE HON. C. SUBRAMANIAM :—" As soon as I announce that we are making enquiries, the whole matter ceases to be confidential. I may assure the hon. Member that every step is being taken in this matter."

SRI S. PANCHAKSHARAM :—" As persons suffering from incurable diseases also commit suicide, may I know how many cases of suicide are due to persons suffering from incurable diseases? "

THE HON. SRI C. SUBRAMANIAM :—" I do not have figures with me with reference to incurable diseases."

SRI S. THINAKARASAMY THEVAR :—" மலபார் ஜில்லாவிலே அனேக தற்கொலைகள் நடப்பதற்குக் காரணம் அங்கு கம்யூனிஸ்டுக் கட்சியின் கொடுமை தாங்கமுடியாத காரணத்தால்தான் என்று சிலர் சொல்லுகிறார்களே அது வாஸ்தவந்தானா ?

THE HON. SRI C. SUBRAMANIAM :—" அது ஒவ்வொருவருடைய அபிப்பிராயத்தையும் பொறுத்திருக்கிறது."

SRI S. RAMALINGAM :—" மலபார் ஜில்லாவில் காங்கிரஸ்காரர்களுடைய கொடுமையினால்தான் அதிகமான தற்கொலைகள் நடந்திருக்கின்றன என்று ஒரு சாரார் பேசிக்கொள்ளுகிறார்களே, அது உண்மைதானா ? "

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THE HON. SRI. C. SUBRAMANIAM :—" கனம் அங்கத்தினர் சொல்வது அவர் பக்கத்திலிருப்பவர்களுடைய அபிப்பிராயமாக ஒரு வேளை இருக்கலாம்."

SRI K. P. KUTTIKRISHNAN NAIR :—" Are the Government aware that these opinions are expressed by members who have nothing to do with Malabar? " (Laughter.) 9-10 a.m.

THE HON. SRI C. SUBRAMANIAM :—" That may be a pertinent point. But sometimes, outsiders are better judges." (Renewed laughter.)

SRI T. C. NARAYANAN NAMBIAR :—" Mr. Speaker, Sir, we the Members of this House put certain interpellations to Hon. Ministers to elicit facts and figures and to see that the grievances of the people are redressed. Mr. Speaker, may I know from you whether the Ministers are in order when they insinuate and utilize this opportunity to scandalize certain ideologies—I do not care what ideology it is—and avoid answering questions properly? I want a ruling from you, Sir."

MR. SPEAKER :—" Let the hon. Member make clear what the insinuation is. It is no good his saying something in general terms."

SRI T. C. NARAYANAN NAMBIAR :—" I shall come to that particular point. The hon. Member, Sri Gopalakrishnan, is an elected Member from that firka and he put a supplementary question with regard to the 24 suicides, the number having been given by the Hon. Minister in his written answer. It is heartrending to note, Mr. Speaker, that the Hon. Minister instead of considering the question sympathetically began telling that the suicides might be due to certain ideologies, thereby making an insinuation and avoiding a direct answer."

MR. SPEAKER :—" I cannot understand any insinuation in this. The Hon. Minister merely said that the suicides might be due to some ideology, like somebody is disappointed with marriage and commits suicide and all that. Because the Hon. Minister said that it was due to some ideology, how does it become an insinuation? "

SRI T. C. NARAYANAN NAMBIAR :—" I may be wrong, Sir, in my understanding. But where the lives of so many people are concerned, I should have expected from the Hon. Minister a more sympathetic reply, at least in these cases."

SRI P. K. GOPALAKRISHNAN :—" One submission, Sir."

MR. SPEAKER :—" Is it the time for submissions? Well, let the hon. Member say what he wants."

SRI P. K. GOPALAKRISHNAN :—" My submission is that the Hon. Minister first said that it may be due to some ideology; when further questions were asked, the Hon. Minister was replying that it may be due to afflictions due to famine or communist ideology. (The Hon. Finance Minister : I did not say ' Communist ideology.') Is that not an insinuation, Sir? "

THE HON. SRI C. SUBRAMANIAM :—" I did not say that. Mr. Nambiar suggested that it has been declared a famine-stricken area. I said that merely a declaration that a particular area is famine stricken or Communist-stricken will not solve the problem; that we should increase the economic development of the area and that Government were attempting to do that. In spite of this responsible and sympathetic answer, I do not see why hon. Members think otherwise."

DR. K. B. MENON :—" May I submit, Sir, that the question-hour is a war of wits and the humour and insinuations injected into these questions and answers add spice to the answers to questions. Denying that will be depriving the House of the liveliness of the whole situation."

MR. SPEAKER :—" Regarding Question No. 1425, the hon. Member Sri Dharmalingam is not in his place. The answer will be printed in the proceedings.

" The hon. Member Sri Ratnam is not in his place. The answer will be . . ."

SRI A. GOVINDASWAMI NAYAGAR :—" I am putting the question of Sri Ratnam on his behalf, Sir."

SRI V. GOVINDASWAMI NAIDU :—" Sir, I shall put the question (1425) on behalf of Sri Dharmalingam."

MR. SPEAKER :—" Why did not the hon. Member stand up and say so when I called out that question? Hereafter, when I call the name of the Member in whose name the question stands some other Member, if he wishes to put that question, should immediately stand up and say that he is putting the question. Mr. Govindaswami Naidu will now put the question No. 1425."

Appointment of Block Development Officers

* 1425 *Q.*—SRI V. GOVINDASWAMI NAIDU (on behalf of Sri M. Dharmalingam): Will the Hon. the Minister for Agriculture be pleased to state—

(*a*) whether it is a fact that the Block Development Officers appointed in the year 1953, are gazetted officers while other Block Development Officers appointed in the year 1954 are non-Gazetted Officers;

(*b*) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(*c*) how many officers are appointed as non-gazetted officers?

THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM :—" (*a*) Yes.

" (*b*) When the National Extension Service Scheme was launched first in 28 Blocks in October 1953, the Government considered that the Block Development Officers should be Gazetted Officers in the scale of Rs. 230—20/2—310—30/2—400 in the initial period when the National Extension